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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 06 TUNIS 000183

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DEPT FOR DS/IP/ITA, DS/IP/NEA

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#)

SUBJECT: TUNIS SECURITY ENVIRONMENT PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE  
(SEPQ) SPRING 2008

REF: SECSTATE 7558

Classified By: AMB Robert F. Godec for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) DEMONSTRATIONS

1A. (SBU) ARE THERE ANY ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN COUNTRY CAPABLE OF CARRYING OUT SIGNIFICANT ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATIONS?

The Government of Tunisia (GOT) is capable of controlling and dispersing any demonstration directed against U.S. facilities. That being said, the GOT is also capable of instigating and executing an anti-American demonstration. The only other group capable of implementing this type of demonstration would be the Tunisian labor union UGTT. The UGTT, which is neither ethnic nor religious, maintains a small square outside of its headquarters which they occasionally make use of to hold political rallies, which often include anti-American remarks.

1B. (SBU) HAVE THERE BEEN ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE COUNTRY WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS?

There have been no anti-American demonstrations in 2007; however, there were two small, peaceful government-sponsored demonstrations in solidarity with Lebanon in summer 2006. A few of the demonstrators shouted anti-American slogans and carried anti-American signs. After the Saddam Hussein execution, the UGTT had a small anti-American rally outside of its headquarters.

1C. (SBU) HAVE DEMONSTRATIONS TAKEN PLACE NEAR OR IN FRONT OF U.S. DIPLOMATIC FACILITIES? No.

1D. (SBU) WHAT IS THE AVERAGE SIZE OF AN ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATION? N/A

1E. (SBU) ARE ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATIONS USUALLY TRIGGERED BY U.S FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES, MILITARY ACTIONS, OR BY DOMESTIC ISSUES? N/A

1F. (SBU) ARE DEMONSTRATIONS GENERALLY VIOLENT OR PEACEFUL? Demonstrators are usually peaceful and the GOT ensures this by positioning large numbers of police officers in the demonstration areas.

1G. (SBU) IF VIOLENT, HAVE ANY DEMONSTRATIONS RESULTED IN DAMAGE TO USG PROPERTY OR INJURIES TO USG EMPLOYEES? N/A

1H. (SBU) IF VIOLENT, HAVE ANY DEMONSTRATORS EVER PENETRATED OUR PERIMETER SECURITY LINE? N/A

¶I. (SBU) HAVE THERE BEEN ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE COUNTRY WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS? No.

¶J. (SBU) HAVE DEMONSTRATIONS TAKEN PLACE NEAR OR IN FRONT OF U.S. DIPLOMATIC FACILITIES? No.

¶K. (SBU) WHAT IS THE AVERAGE SIZE OF AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATION? N/A

¶L. (SBU) ARE DEMONSTRATIONS GENERALLY VIOLENT OR PEACEFUL? N/A

¶M. (SBU) IF VIOLENT, HAVE ANY DEMONSTRATIONS RESULTED IN DAMAGE TO USG PROPERTY? N/A

¶2. (SBU) MACRO CONFLICT CONDITIONS

¶A. (S) IS THE HOST COUNTRY ENGAGED IN AN INTERSTATE OR INTRASTATE CONFLICT? (THIS MAY INCLUDE BATTLES BETWEEN ORGANIZED AND VIOLENT DRUG CARTELS).

As manifested in the December 2006 and January 2007 GOT security operations in which GOT security forces disrupted a terror cell, the GOT is actively pursuing terrorists. These gun battles included two major skirmishes in the greater Tunis area. The problems posed by the porous Algerian border were evidenced by the fact that six individuals had crossed into Tunisia undetected with the purported intent of conducting terrorist attacks.

Tunisia also faces illegal cross-border migration from Algeria and Libya to Europe. Criminal cartels continue to ferry illegal aliens through Tunisian territorial waters and are often intercepted by Tunisian naval/coast guard units. These routes are also being used as a conduit for illegal drugs. The proceeds of the smuggling have been linked to

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financial support of terrorist activities in Iraq.

¶B. (SBU) IF AN INTRASTATE CONFLICT, IS IT AN INSURGENCY LIMITED TO A SPECIFIC REGION OR IS IT A COUNTRYWIDE CIVIL WAR?

The pursuit of terrorists focused on the border regions and population centers but the entire country was subject to increased police presence during the December 2006/January 2007 incursions.

¶C. (SBU) IF LIMITED TO A SPECIFIC REGION, ARE ANY U.S. DIPLOMATIC FACILITIES LOCATED IN THIS REGION?

U.S. diplomatic facilities are limited to the greater Tunis area.

¶D. (S/NF) HAVE ANY OF THE FACTIONS INVOLVED IN INTRASTATE CONFLICTS SIGNALLED OR DEMONSTRATED AN ANTI-AMERICAN ORIENTATION?

The GOT claims that the group they disrupted in January 2007 had plans to attack the U.S. and U.K. embassies and select personnel. However, the GOT has not shared any tangible evidence of this to date, nor was any such evidence presented in their trial in late 2007, although one defendant admitted that the group intended to target "crusader" sites.

¶3. (SBU) HOST COUNTRY CAPABILITIES

¶A. (SBU) ARE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES (LEA) PROFESSIONAL AND WELL-TRAINED?

Yes. LEA's are professional and adequately trained. Police officers receive one year of general police academy training and one year follow-on specialized training (i.e. VIP protection, criminal investigations, motorbike patrol). Police officers who demonstrate high proficiency in their second year of training are recruited for special units (i.e. special forces, anti-terrorist, quick response teams). Local traffic police, a separate entity from other LEA's, also receive specialized training.

¶B. (C) HAVE THEY BEEN TRAINED BY U.S. AGENCIES? IF SO,

PLEASE ELABORATE ON EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING.

Yes. DS/ATA has had a long relationship with the GOT, however, the last DS/ATA training occurred in August 2004. Thirty-two GOT officials participated in an airport security management seminar. Since then, DS/ATA has offered a variety of training opportunities, which were usually turned down at the last minute. RSO communications with various lower level officials indicate that they desire further training. The Department of Defense through Embassy Tunis' Office of Defense Cooperative has been more successful in providing training to Ministry of Defense personnel but the Ministry of Defense is prohibited from performing police activities.

1C. (C) ARE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES CONFRONTED WITH SERIOUS, WIDESPREAD CORRUPTION INSIDE THEIR AGENCIES?

In early 2004, the GOT created the position of Chief Inspector of the Internal Security Forces and Customs within the Ministry of Interior (MOI) to investigate corruption and other law enforcement abuses. Little information about the activities of this group or any other corruption within the Tunisian law enforcement community is officially released or able to be verified. It is known that street-side bribes occur within the lower ranks of the traffic police to forego traffic suspensions.

1D. (S) ARE THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES PROFESSIONAL AND CAPABLE OF DETERRING TERRORIST ACTIONS?

Yes. The GOT maintains an active internal and modest external intelligence network focused on preserving civil peace and order within Tunisia's borders. Through extensive use of informants and surveillance, the GOT produces intelligence-related information and aggressively addresses any perceived threat to national security and regime stability.

In order to further combat domestic terrorism, the Ministry of Interior and Local Development (MOI) has centralized terrorism investigations in their Tunis office. The police and paramilitary National Guard divisions of the MOI have each established an antiterrorism director to coordinate terrorism investigations and more easily share information.

1E. (S/NF) HAVE THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES BEEN COOPERATIVE WITH U.S. EMBASSY REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND SUPPORT?

Although the intelligence services continue to streamline

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their liaison decision-making processes, the GOT continues to impede dissemination of information outside of the GOT, even during a threat. From the outset of the MOI encounter with the terrorists in Hamman Lif (southeast suburban Tunis) on December 23, 2006 until the final confrontation in Soliman (farther southeast of Tunis) on January 3, 2007, the GOT did not/not share any information concerning the threat against the U.S. Embassy with anyone in the Embassy despite specific formal and informal requests from the Ambassador, DCM and other section heads. Originally, they stated that the incident involved organized crime elements. Once GOT officials revealed that a terrorist group was active in Tunisia, they stated that the group's intention was to create havoc in the tourist areas of Hammamet (forty-five minutes southwest of Tunis). On January 5, 2007, the GOT informed the Ambassador that the U.S. and U.K. Embassies were among the groups intended targets. One week later, the GOT made a public statement to that effect.

On the criminal investigations side, official requests to the MOI regarding information on criminal activities, specifically incidents against Americans and incidents in Iraq continue to go unanswered or delayed. Specifically, information on a possible internet sex predator was passed to the Tunisians in May 2007 and information concerning pay phone scams was also shared. The RSO has not received any indication that any investigative action has been taken in either case. On a positive note, one letters rogatory requesting interviews with the FBI was granted in 2007.

¶F. (S/NF) ASSUMING THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT TERRORIST THREATS IN RECENT YEARS, HAVE HOST COUNTRY SECURITY SERVICES BEEN ABLE TO SCORE ANY MAJOR ANTI-TERRORISM SUCCESSES? Beyond the December 2006/January 2007 incidents, the GOT has accepted repatriation of captured Tunisian extremists who face prosecution for violation of Tunisia's strict anti-terrorist laws and promptly sentenced. Two Guantanamo detainees were repatriated in summer 2007.

¶G. (SBU) HAS HOST COUNTRY BEEN RESPONSIVE (RE: TIMELINESS AND ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES) TO EMBASSY REQUESTS FOR PROTECTIVE SECURITY?

Yes. The GOT provided the Embassy with significant protective resources and security support for many high level visits in 2007. The GOT officers are professional and conscientious. Provided the request is scheduled in advance, the GOT provides ample assistance to include follow cars, motorbike patrols, foot patrols (uniform and undercover), etc. We do not expect a change in the GOT's responsiveness to these requests.

¶H. (SBU) HOW DOES THE EMBASSY ASSESS THE OVERALL SECURITY AT MAJOR AIRPORTS IN THE COUNTRY? (EXCELLENT; VERY GOOD; GOOD/AVERAGE; POOR)

The Embassy would assess airport security as good/average. The GOT is working to expand its airport services and hopes to be a major African hub; therefore the GOT has increased airport security overall. Numerous uniformed officers are positioned on the roadway in front of the main terminal.

Airport safety officials from the United Kingdom met with the RSO after their May 2007 visit to the Tunis/Carthage International Airport. The officials indicated that the security of the airport changed depending on the personnel on duty.

Additionally, a number of visitors to Tunisia arrive via cruise ships. Since Tunisia is a popular destination for UK citizens, UK Department for Transport representatives visited the La Goulette commercial seaport in October 2007. They determined the security at Tunis' major seaport to be good/average. They echoed the airport safety officials' May 2007 statements in regards to the attentiveness of police personnel on site.

¶I. (C) HOW EFFECTIVE ARE CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION CONTROLS AGENCIES? (EFFECTIVE; AVERAGE; INEFFECTIVE)

Average. During a visit to the Port of Rades, Tunisia's main container port, by CODEL Costello in August 2007, the Director General of the Merchant Marine and Ports Office (OMMP) and the OMMP's Director of Port Security and Safety noted that the Port is in full compliance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code and has been recognized for security best practices. The delegation was given a demonstration of the Port's container scanning

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procedures. The OMMP claimed that 100 percent of all imported and exported containers are scanned.

Immigration controls appear to be effective at international airports and we have no specific evidence to the contrary. Borders are reported to be somewhat porous. GOT security elements are specifically concerned about their western border with Algeria.

As stated above, Tunisia also faces illegal cross-border migration from Algeria and Libya to Europe. Criminal cartels continue to ferry illegal aliens through Tunisian territorial waters and are often intercepted by Tunisian naval/coast guard units and merchant vessels on their way to Italian islands.

¶J. (S/NF) HOW EFFECTIVE ARE BORDER PATROL FORCES? (EFFECTIVE; AVERAGE; INEFFECTIVE)

Average. The GOT continues to patrol its border areas with aging equipment. Its scarce monetary resources hinder the national guard and military's border patrol capabilities. The GOT continues to request US assistance in obtaining new equipment for this purpose, specifically helicopters, sensors, night vision goggles and spare parts. In August 2007, the US transferred seven UH1H Huey helicopters to the Tunisian Air Force for distribution throughout the country. These helicopters are in addition to those they already have.

Along the Algerian border north of the Sahara Desert, the paramilitary National Guard is stationed as a first line of defense with the army a few kilometers inland for support. The National Guard relies on static posts and both forces conduct continuous patrols. The army operates a small number of surveillance radars which provide limited coverage due to both the inadequate numbers and age of the equipment. The military exclusively patrols the Sahara borders with Algeria and Libya and relies on the same type of aged radar equipment.

The Embassy regularly receives reports from locally engaged staff (LES) whose family lives near border areas. These LES state that the GOT is capable and does regularly increase border checks and uniformed officers especially around major holidays.

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INDIGENOUS TERRORISM  
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14. (SBU) ANTI-AMERICAN TERRORIST GROUPS

1A. (S/NF) ARE THERE INDIGENOUS, ANTI-AMERICAN TERRORIST GROUPS IN COUNTRY?

The group that targeted the Embassy is believed to be the linked to Al Qa'ida in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Based on publicized arrests and capture of Tunisian Islamic extremists involved in support and execution of extremist activities in Spain, Belgium, Italy, Bosnia, Denmark, Iraq and the trial of thirty terrorists allegedly planning domestic attacks, one must conclude there are further anti-American elements in Tunisia who support violence against the U.S. presence in Tunisia and Iraq. The support of Islamic extremism appears to be linked to the global jihad movement. One alarming fact associated with the December 2006/January 2007 incidents indicates that the small group of six who illegally entered Tunisia via the Algerian border in April 2006 was able to recruit over thirty more individuals for their cause in only six weeks.

In the past, Tunisian terrorist groups who were known to be active outside of Tunisia and who have espoused anti-American views, such as the Tunisian Combatant Group (TCG aka Tunisian Islamic Fighting Group) and the Tunisian Islamic Front (TIF), may still have supporters in Tunisia.

Although the GOT does not publicly acknowledge their existence, it can be safely assumed that terrorists and terrorist sympathizers are present in Tunisia.

1B. (SBU) IF YES, HOW MANY? 3. PLEASE NAME GROUPS. See above

1C. (SBU) HAVE GROUPS CARRIED OUT ANTI-AMERICAN ATTACKS WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS? No.

1D. (SBU) WERE ANY OF THESE LETHAL ATTACKS? N/A

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1E. (SBU) HAVE GROUPS ATTACKED U.S. DIPLOMATIC TARGETS? No.

1F. (SBU) HAVE GROUPS ATTACKED U.S. BUSINESS, U.S. MILITARY, OR U.S.-RELATED TARGETS? No.

1G. (SBU) HAVE GROUPS LIMITED THEIR ATTACKS TO SPECIFIC



REGIONS OR DO THEY OPERATE COUNTRY-WIDE? N/A

1H. (SBU) IF ATTACKS ARE LIMITED TO REGIONS, ARE THERE ANY U.S. DIPLOMATIC FACILITIES LOCATED IN THESE REGIONS? N/A

15. (SBU) OTHER INDIGENOUS TERRORIST GROUPS

1A. (SBU) ARE THERE OTHER INDIGENOUS TERRORIST GROUPS (NOT ANTI-AMERICAN) IN COUNTRY? None known.

1B. (SBU) IF YES, HOW MANY? PLEASE NAME GROUPS. N/A

1C. (SBU) HAVE GROUPS CARRIED OUT ATTACKS IN THE CAPITAL OR IN AREAS WHERE U.S. DIPLOMATIC FACILITIES ARE LOCATED? No.

1D. (SBU) WERE ATTACKS LETHAL AND/OR INDISCRIMINATE? N/A

1E. (SBU) HAVE THERE BEEN ANY AMERICANS KILLED OR INJURED IN THESE ATTACKS? N/A

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TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM  
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16. (SBU) TRANSNATIONAL TERRORIST INDICATORS

1A. (S/NF) ARE THERE ANY FOREIGN TERRORIST GROUPS THAT HAVE A PRESENCE IN COUNTRY? Yes.  
PROVIDE NAMES: GSPC, AQIM, other pro-Islamic insurgent sympathizers.

1B. (S) HOW DOES POST ASSESS THIS PRESENCE? IS IT AN OPERATIONAL CELL? FINANCIAL CELL? SUPPORT CELL? PROPAGANDA CELL?

Based on the direct threat against the Embassy mentioned above and the presence of Tunisians actively participating in terrorist activity around the world (i.e. Madrid train bombings, Iraqi suicide attacks, Guantanamo detainees), operational, financial and support cells exist in Tunisia. Without specific evidence to the contrary, presence of propaganda cells can be assumed.

1C. (C) IS THE HOST GOVERNMENT SYMPATHETIC TO THESE GROUPS? No. The GOT actively pursues these groups, as they are a threat to the current regime and its economic base - tourism.

1D. (S) ARE THERE SUSPECT NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) IN THE COUNTRY THAT HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH ANY OF THESE GROUPS?

A popular, non-militant and influential NGO is the Da'Wa Al-Tabligh. This Islamic NGO, which has been present in Tunisia since the mid-1970's, has been operating through the countryside and in urban neighborhoods, urging strict observance of Koranic teachings. The Embassy suspects that some elements of the Da'Wa may use this organization as a cover to recruit youths for extremist activities.

1E. (SBU) ARE THERE ANY ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN COUNTRY THAT ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THESE GROUPS?

Yes, some Arab nationalists and Islamic sympathizers in Tunisia would support groups with radical Arab and Muslim causes.

1F. (S/NF) HOW DOES POST ASSESS THE LEVEL, INTENT, AND SCOPE OF HOSTILE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES (IRAN, IRAQ, SYRIA, SERBIA, SUDAN, ET. AL.) IN COUNTRY RELATIVE TO POTENTIAL ANTI-AMERICAN TERRORIST ACTS?

Hostile intelligence services exist in Tunisia; however, it is difficult to assess their abilities. Their ability to conduct acts of terrorism or even conduct intelligence operations are constrained due to their limited resources and the strict covert and overt Tunisian surveillance against foreign missions.

1G. (S/NF) HOW DOES POST ASSESS THE AVAILABILITY OF WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVES IN COUNTRY OR FROM NEARBY COUNTRIES FOR HOSTILE TERRORIST ELEMENTS?

The GOT would argue that it has excellent control of

information and intelligence that minimizes the ability of hostile groups to smuggle and transport weapons and explosives. The sandy desert borders shared with Algeria and Libya combined with the aging border patrol equipment provide a great opportunity for entry of illegal munitions. GOT raids and encounters in December 2006 and January 2007 produced a variety of automatic weapons (Kalashnikovs) and explosive ordnance (ammonium nitrate, TATP). The GOT informed the U.S. Embassy that it found fifty to sixty kilograms of explosives fabricated in Tunisia. In 2007, to combat the fabrication of explosives in Tunisia, the GOT announced changes in the types of fertilizers that are permitted for use in country.

The support systems that produced and transported these weapons from the border regions throughout the country indicate that it is not as difficult as the GOT would have us believe. Further we cannot assume that the GOT has been able to seize all illegal weapons or explosives.  
GODEC